

NORTH DOOR, NORTON CHURCH, GLOUCESTERSHIRE.



DOORWAY AT NORTON CHURCH, GLOUCESTERSHIRE.

UPON the road to Tewkesbury from Gloucester, Norton Church will be found far above the pathway: having ascended, the visitor will be amply repaid for his steep walk by the interesting north doorway here represented, and also by the eastern window, which is of "Early Second Pointed" character (or Decorated), of two lights, with shafts and double splay. The church consists of chancel, nave with south porch, and a capital western tower, having good angular buttresses and projecting staircase turret. The doorway represented is not now in use, having been blocked up from within, and the pathway which led to it is no more. The jambs and cusping are splayed.

THE SKINNERS' HALL, DOWGATE-HILL.

WE found ourselves the other day dining with the Worshipful Company of Skinners, Mr. Richard Knight, now Master, and Messrs. Dermer, Nixon, Paull, and Hoggart, Wardens. Right royally do they do these things in the City, with form of state, glittering service, "loving cup," and profuse hospitality. Turning in from the narrow, dingy street behind St. Paul's, known as Dowgate-hill, few would expect to find a building of such pretensions as the Skinners' Hall. This Company was incorporated as early as 1327, and stands sixth of the twelve great companies of London. The building was destroyed in the great fire of 1666, and would seem to have been rebuilt immediately afterwards; the drawing-room, a richly fitted apartment, lined

wholly with most odorous cedar, fully carved and enriched, being of that period.

This had been painted over, and being found in a bad state when cleaned, has been restored almost wholly with new cedar, under the direction of the Company's present architect, Mr. George Moore, F.R.S. The mouldings and carved members are gilded, so that it lights up better at night than would otherwise be the case. We suspect the architect has scarcely had his own way in the ceiling, which is left perfectly plain, and evidently does not belong to the room. A greater mistake could scarcely have been made.

Mr. Moore has also rebuilt the dining hall, a noble apartment, where at least 150 persons may dine, with a recess for the sideboard at the dais end, and an Ionic gallery for the "minstrels" at the other. It is Italian in style, is mainly lighted from the roof, and the ceiling is coffered and very fully enriched.

On the walls above the wainscoting are panels to receive frescoes, at present void. It is to be hoped that they will not long remain so. It would be a good example to other of the City companies. They owe much to their predecessors, and ought, in turn, to do something for posterity.

The company have a large school at Tonbridge, and by and by, when certain leases tumble in, will have the means of educating half London.

Budge-row,* in Watling-street, hard by, smells of the skinners, and Skinner's Well, Clerkenwell, was so called; says Stowe, "for the skinners of London held there certain plays yearly, played of Holy Scripture."

* So called of Budge fur.

ON ARCHITECTURAL PRINCIPLES AND THE TONE OF WRITERS.

LIKE your correspondent, "An Amateur," I also have searched nearly all the works of any celebrity or pretensions relating to this art, from Alberti down to the present day, and with the same object which he professes to have had in view. But with better fortune than he seems to have enjoyed, I have, as I believe, found in them several principles of general applicability to the art, and have no doubt that many others, which escaped my notice, lie scattered through these works. But while thus learning, as I think, many true principles of architecture, I have failed in detecting a single *established* principle, or even a single rule, or a single fact of any generality, which is not at present disputed. In the sister arts, the writings of Sir Joshua Reynolds and others seem to have placed a few (very few) rules on such a footing as to constitute a little neutral ground (as your correspondent calls it); incomparably less, indeed, than that which the Galileos and Newtons have secured for physical science, but yet just sufficient to enable the professors of these arts (by great care) to write or speak on them and yet avoid collision. It might be supposed that in so eminent and fertile a subject as architecture there would also be at least a thing or two so obvious or so notorious as to be undisputed; but, however incredible it may appear to those who have not studied this art, I confess that a search of many years has not enabled me to discover one such fact. If any of your readers can direct me to one, I shall be greatly obliged. I do not, of course, mean principles applicable to art in general, but peculiarly architectural ones. There are many principles which no one disputes in their abstract shape, and yet, in applying them to architecture, its professors differ so widely as to deduce two incompatible or directly opposite rules of action from the same principle.

In this state of things, then, the plan pursued by popular writers on science is not, as your correspondent supposes, applicable to writing on art. We cannot confine ourselves to the neutral ground, for the simple reason that there is no neutral ground: every spot that we can take for a footing is disputed by some party or other. I am not blind to the advantages of your "Amateur's" method where practicable. If scientific writers would but confine themselves to what is known and established—to that "grand domain of neutral ground upon which no quarrels are permitted, upon which all disputes are settled, and all points of disagreement adjusted," it is plain they could not fail to instruct some readers, and win the assent of all scientific men; and science, relinquishing the vain ambition of perpetually extending her territory, would rest in sedate and dignified ease, content with her already vast acquisitions. But whatever might be the advantages of this plan, they are denied to artists; for, on turning to the theory of fine arts, very little study is required to show us that the present state of this is not identical with the present state of physical science, but rather resembles its state two or three centuries ago, before an inch of the present neutral ground was neutral,—while every spot on which the Galileos and Newtons could set foot was disputed; and if "Amateur" will turn to their writings, he will find that, though not using the elegant language which he attributes to artists (but which I have not met with)—though not taxing each other with "trash," "rubbish," or even (in his own mild terms) with "hollow fallacy" and "insult to common sense,"—they yet found it necessary to disagree; and your correspondent, if living then, would doubtless have found it necessary to protest against the tone of their books, and complain of the sad task, "to him who is impressed with a feeling of love and admiration for the pure, the beautiful, and the true in nature and in art, to wade through" them.

The fact is, Sir, that in such a subject as science then was, or art-theory now is, there is only one way of avoiding disagreement. There is such an art as that of speaking long and yet saying nothing. Writers who would please all must learn this art. By its means they will find it easy to extend volumes on architecture to any length without saying anything, and therefore without differing from any party;